

Our grade K-2 school Bilingual Department would like to submit for recognition a practice of "Basic Skills - Basic Needs; the Path to English Literacy". Our school has a significant number of children with some or all of the following impediments to learning; hunger, minimal parental involvement in education, and a lack of readiness skills entering first grade. We hope to address the needs of the whole child in an attempt to ensure that bilingual students are reading in English at or near grade level when exited from the ESL/Bilingual Program. The model of delivering bilingual services to kindergarten students has been restructured, and we have added extensive extracurricular support programs for students and their families, in order to achieve the following objectives:

1. Improve the English writing and reading ability of bilingual students
2. Enable bilingual families to be involved in our school
3. Provide help in meeting basic needs of bilingual families so that students can focus on their education.

Bilingual services in our school are delivered as a "bilingual part-time component", with the intent of minimizing the amount of time the bilingual child is out of the mainstream class. All bilingual kindergarten children are taught in a mainstream kindergarten class by the bilingual teacher and the kindergarten teacher (who also speaks Spanish) and a paraprofessional. The teachers team teach and incorporate Spanish language and culture into daily instruction.

Families of bilingual students are invited and encouraged to participate in our Family English Literacy and World Language Program called "Side by Side". Through this program, participants are given the opportunity to learn English and teach Spanish by cooperating with English speaking families in literacy activities. Families are given books and magazines to keep at home, as well as materials for doing homework. We enjoy dinner together at these sessions. We hope to tend to basic needs while teaching basic skills.

First grade students who are not able to keep up with their grade level in learning to read are invited to our before school "Breakfast and Books Program", funded in part by local industry and a community group. The before school program is staffed by at least two certified teachers, with help from teacher volunteers, Rutgers Education students, and parents. Students are tutored in reading and helped with their homework. Activities include phonics instruction, reading aloud stories and rhymes, writing activities, and computer and other learning games.

Many of the students in question have come to school without having eaten a proper breakfast. The resulting lack of energy and distraction from stomach aches compound the difficulty these children are experiencing in school. We give them an even start each day by providing them with a nutritious breakfast before the tutoring session.

2. Students were identified for the programs mentioned above in various ways. The bilingual students were identified through the district's testing procedure of identifying ESL students. The participants in the "Breakfast and Books" and the families in the "Side by Side" programs were invited as a result of teacher recommendation. These children started first grade without knowing all the letters or their sounds, and some of them show signs of learning disability.

This program addresses the following *Core Curriculum Content Standards*:
Standard 3.2 All students will listen actively in a variety of situations to information from a variety of sources.
Cumulative Progress Indicators:

2. Students demonstrate comprehension of a story, interview, and oral report of an event or incident.
3. Students listen for a variety of purposes, such as enjoyment and obtaining information.

Standard 3.3 All students will write in clear concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

Standard 3.4 All students will read various materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis.
Cumulative Progress Indicators:

2. Students listen and respond to whole texts.
4. Students use reading for different purposes such as enjoyment, learning and problem-solving.
9. Students use prior knowledge to extend reading ability and comprehension and to link aspects of the text with experiences and people in their own lives.

Standard 3.5 All students will view, understand, and use contextual visual information.
Cumulative Progress Indicators:

5. Students respond to and evaluate the use of illustrations to support text.
6. Students recognize and use pictorial information that supplements text.
7. Students use symbols, drawings, and illustrations to represent information that supports and/or enhances their writing.

Standard 7.2 All students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationship between language and culture for at least one world language in addition to English.

Research supported by the National Institute of Health concludes that reading problems can be solved with one half hour of daily, structured, small group instruction during kindergarten and first grade. We are providing students with this extra help, which addresses the *Language Arts and Literacy Standards*, by using the *Project Read Phonology* curriculum in the before-school program. As several classroom and small group teachers are using this method to supplement reading instruction in the classroom, the targeted students will benefit from the consistency and reinforcement of a unified reading program presented by homeroom and pull-out teachers and tutors.

In addition to phonics instruction, children are provided with phonemic awareness activities which provide a basis for the ability to listen effectively as prescribed by *Standard 3.2*. There is an emphasis on rhyming and discrimination of sounds.

In both the before-school and family involvement programs, children are read to and are given reading materials to keep both in English and Spanish. *Standards 3.2, 3.4, and 3.5* are addressed in a variety of literacy activities including shared reading in a group, listening to books on cassette, informational videos, and family members reading to each other; and by providing a lending library and information about the public library.

Standard 3.3 was carried out in a family activity in our evening program in which each family wrote a story about themselves. Parents helped children compose the story, and children helped parents use the computer. The computer lab buzzed with intense activity during those evenings. Daily writing activities are provided in the before school program, as well.

The interrelationship between the Spanish language and culture, as stated in *Standard 7.2*, is being most happily and naturally explored in kindergarten, as the curriculum is expanded to include books, poems, songs and vocabulary in Spanish. Team teaching affords many "teachable moments" when a Spanish nursery rhyme or picture book fits perfectly with the theme of the day. Familiar fairy tales are read in Spanish, with props and translations to ensure understanding. Daily calendar activities are interwoven with Spanish number, color, and calendar words. Spanish greetings and common vocabulary words are reinforced naturally as they occur in conversation. Even the paraprofessional has committed herself to learning a new Spanish word daily.

Bilingual students are doubly advantaged by this team teaching approach. They are an integral part of the mainstream class as they participate in all activities while receiving translation to ensure understanding; and they are allowed to be the experts and teachers when the class is engaged in an activity involving Spanish.

3. Assessment of our first objective of improving the English writing and reading ability of bilingual students will be accomplished through the following:

- *Pre and post test of letter recognition, knowledge of letter sounds and sight words
- *Pre and post writing sample
- *Students write periodically in a journal
- *Record students reading on audio and/or video cassette
- *Students will read to school during morning announcements.
- *Use of lending library

The objective of involving families in our school will be assessed by keeping attendance at sessions of our family involvement programs, school resource committee meetings, and parent conferences.

The final objective of providing help in meeting basic needs of bilingual families will be assessed by recording attendance at the breakfast program and family involvement program, which provide meals. School attendance will be monitored to ensure students are not missing school because they don't have proper winter clothing or rain gear. Homeroom teachers will be polled about homework completion. When it is not being done because of lack of materials or because parents don't understand the assignment, an intervention will be made.

This comprehensive approach to preventing the failure to learn to read in the primary grades is the result of the efforts of a team of teachers and the building principal, who have been working since last year on innovative solutions. The children and their families are responding with consistent attendance at the extracurricular activities, and the community is responding with their time and donations. We are very hopeful that our combined efforts will result in a group of children who will enter the next grade with the skills they need to succeed.